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Utah Prepared to Meet Tougher Federal Ozone Rules

Salt Lake City, Utah – Utah environmental regulators will continue to work with industry and others to develop solutions to meet the new tougher ozone levels announced today by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Already, air quality officials have been working with school districts to retrofit school buses with cleaner technology to reduce air pollution. And state office buildings have begun making strides to put in place more energy-efficient policies and practices to fight air pollution.

But other options will be explored.

“We may be looking at tightening regulations for gasoline stations, among other alternatives,” said Cheryl Heying, director of the Utah Division of Air Quality. “We have been expecting a new, tougher ozone standard and will ensure all areas meet the standard as soon as possible.”

The EPA today said the allowable amount of ozone – or smog – in the air be reduced from 80 parts per billion to 75 parts per billion. That means the Utah counties impacted are: Salt Lake, Davis, Weber, Utah, Box Elder and Tooele.

Governor Jon Huntsman has made improvements to air quality one of his top priorities. The 2008 Legislature appropriated over $2 million in ongoing General Fund money to help meet tougher federal air quality regulations.

The new EPA standard reflects a growing view among scientists that less pollution than previously thought can impact health. Ozone is a mix of chemicals emitted mainly from vehicle emissions and industrial sources. It becomes more troublesome on hot summer days that can make it difficult for people to breathe. Studies also have linked increased ozone levels with respiratory illnesses and lung inflammation.

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